

Meeting Resident Needs, Sustaining Resident Involvement



Objectives

You will learn:

- ◆ To assess the capacity and interests of your community.
- ◆ To design programs that are responsive to resident interests.
- ◆ To use resident and community resources to support programmatic efforts.
- ◆ To sustain resident involvement through resident resource investment and building a sense of community ownership.

Key Points

- ◆ Paradigm shift from meeting resident needs to identifying resident resources and interests and the reasons for differentiating between the two.
- ◆ Importance of resident involvement in program planning and implementation processes.
- ◆ Review of data collection and analysis methods.
- ◆ Matching resident resources with resident interests to create new programs or invigorate existing programs.
- ◆ Tips for recruiting resident and community resources—developing win-win partnerships.
- ◆ Leveraging resident and community partnerships to optimize resident participation.
- ◆ Strategies for building a sense of community ownership of the NN center and its programs.



Program Development Materials

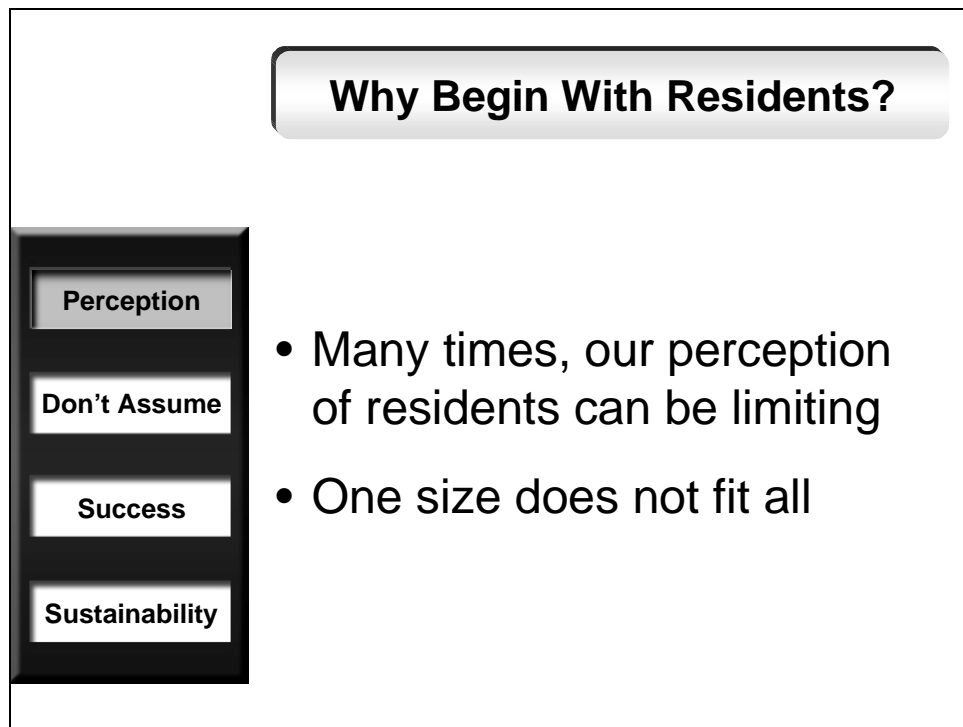
Meeting Resident Needs/Sustaining Resident Involvement

The vitality and long-term success of any Neighborhood Networks center primarily depends on the participation of its residents. No matter how relevant or attractive the programs your center offers, if the community it serves does not feel actively engaged, program attendance will decline and services will eventually be discontinued because of disuse.

An important aspect of the Neighborhood Networks initiative is that no two centers are alike. Residents, property owners, and managers establish local centers that are tailored to the needs of their communities. Rather than deciding in advance what programs a particular resident group or community needs or desires, it is crucial that you first solicit information and feedback from residents directly, from the earliest phase of planning for your center.

This section will offer guidelines for assessing resident needs and the programs that will be of most value, ways of encouraging active participation, and tips on sustaining maximum resident involvement towards the future development of your Neighborhood Networks Center.

Why Begin With Residents?



Why Begin With Residents?

Perception

Don't Assume

Success

Sustainability

- They will tell you what they want

Why Begin With Residents?

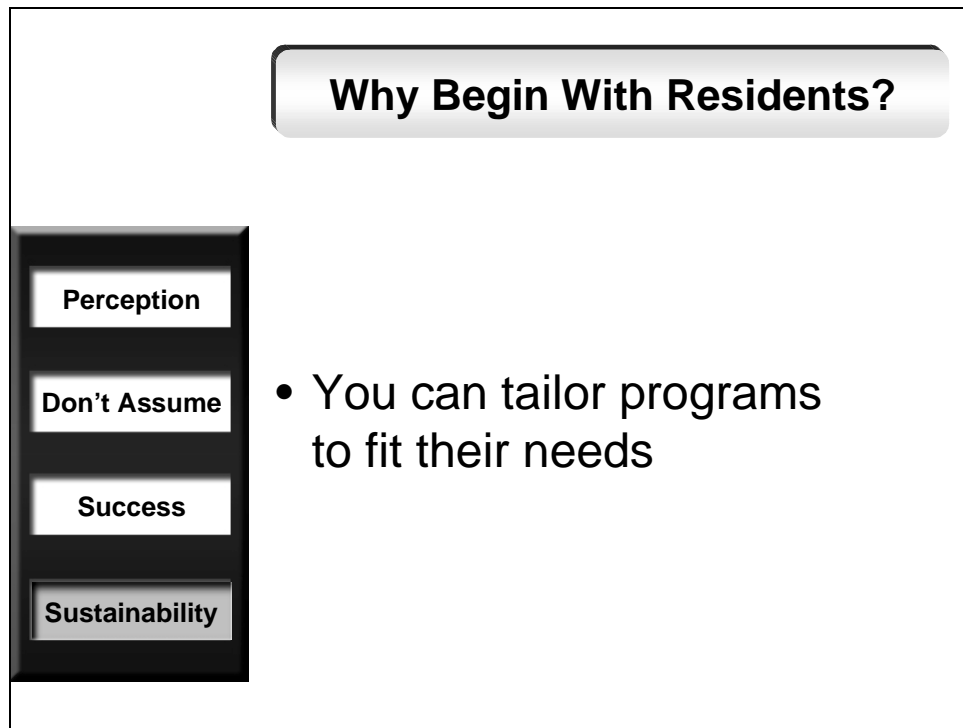
Perception

Don't Assume

Success

Sustainability

- You will learn about their desire for success



At times, the best efforts and intentions of those involved with the planning and management of NN centers can fall short, due to assumptions about what will most benefit residents, other stakeholders, and the community at large. Generalizations based on age, race, or gender may result in residents being stereotyped, with the result that individual needs will go unmet, and programs that could increase participation will not be implemented.

To achieve long-term sustainability of your center, involve residents in every phase of planning from assessing needs to program development and evaluation. Treated as partners in this process rather than passive recipients, residents will provide straightforward information about their individual needs and desires as well as collective goals for the center's success.

Encouraging Resident Participation

How to Involve Residents

Include

Involve

- Active residents on center's steering committee

How to Involve Residents

Include

Involve

- Residents in brainstorming sessions about programs
- Opportunities for residents to actively participate in development of center programs

How to Involve Residents (continued)

Consider

Keep

- Hiring residents who have used the center successfully and gained marketable skills

How to Involve Residents (continued)

Consider

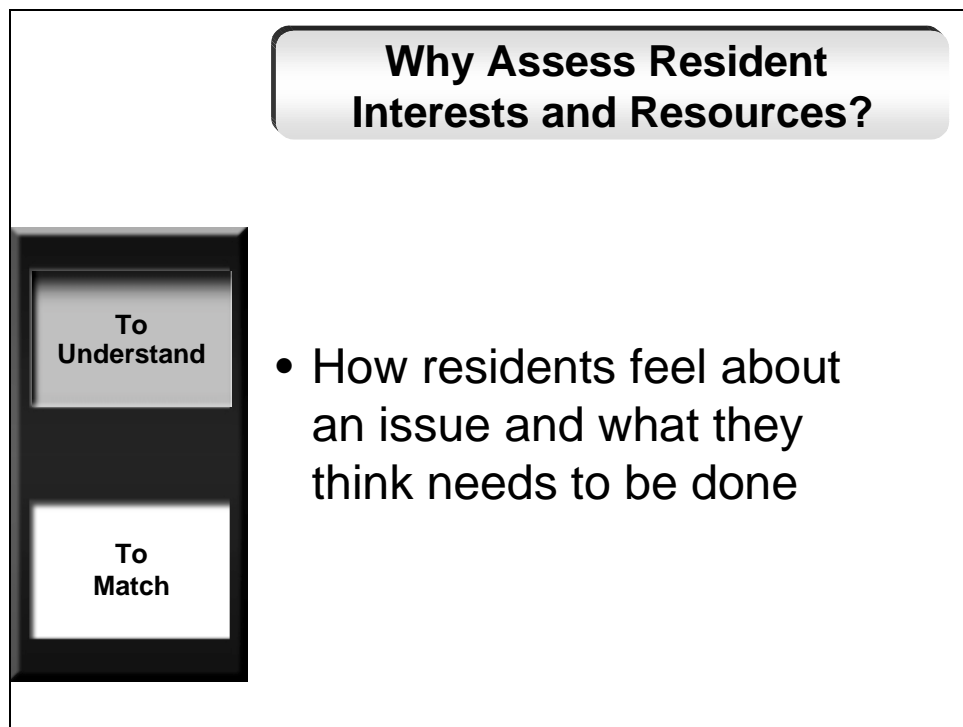
Keep

- Residents fully informed of all activities to sustain trust, support, and involvement

Effective first steps in engaging residents is to include them on the center's steering committee, so that they have an active role from the beginning in guiding its course and developing programs. Residents who have completed previous programs and applied new skills in the community might also be hired to coordinate or run new program offerings.

More informally, residents can be invited to join in "brainstorming" sessions in which through the free flow of ideas and experiences, they can generate creative and meaningful input to program design. These meetings can also serve as an opportunity to fully inform residents of new developments, thus instilling trust and the assurance that their participation is essential to the center's success.

Assess Resident Needs and Resources



Why Assess Resident Interests and Resources?

To Understand

- Programs with the people that the center will serve

To Match

Why Assess Resident Interests and Resources? (continued)

To Determine

- How much space and what type of equipment the center needs

To Set Up

To Find Out

Why Assess Resident Interests and Resources? (continued)

To Determine

To Set Up

To Find Out

- A schedule that best accommodates residents

Why Assess Resident Interests and Resources? (continued)

To Determine

To Set Up

To Find Out

- How many and what types of resources will be required

How to Assess Resident Interests, Needs, and Resources



- Gap between what a situation is and what it should be

How to Assess Resident Interests, Needs, and Resources



- Anything used to improve quality of community life

How to Assess Resident Interests, Needs, and Resources

Needs

Resources

Seek Input

Identify

- On survey design and delivery in advance

How to Assess Resident Interests, Needs, and Resources

Needs

Resources

Seek Input

Identify

- “Gaps” and how they can be addressed

How to Assess Resident Interests, Needs, and Resources (continued)

Work

- With residents to identify potential resources, including those they have to offer

Obtain

How to Assess Resident Interests, Needs, and Resources (continued)

Work

- Commitment from residents regarding participation in survey

Obtain

One of the first strategies to implement in determining the needs of your community and the residents who will participate in the center is to conduct formal assessments. These can range from demographic surveys to information gathering about needs for particular services, program

and schedule priorities, data that you will need regarding the spatial and equipment needs of the center, available resources, and other issues affecting stakeholders.

Data Collection Tools and Methods

Demographic Survey

The first step in learning more about the residents who use your Neighborhood Networks center is to obtain information about them. START, the Neighborhood Networks Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool—designed as a workbook and companion guide to developing an online business plan—has a Demographic Reporting Form that can be useful. This allows a center planner to enter in the number of residents and such characteristics as race, gender and education level. By simply entering numbers, the Strategic Tracking And Reporting Tool (START) calculates, records and maintains the accurate demographic makeup of the center. This step will help center planners select programs and services that are appropriate for the residents the center serves.

Program Survey

A survey of residents should be easy and straightforward. The survey will accomplish two goals. It will help you identify the programs that will be valuable to residents and attract residents to the programs and services the center offers. By establishing programs that are of interest to residents, the center will improve its utilization and obtain programmatic goals.

After you have completed the demographic portion of the survey, it is important to ask the residents about their interests. The residents determine the program focus, so make sure you understand what will help them achieve their goals, whether it is getting a job or education or helping children become academic achievers.

It is possible to use START for this task. The following page is an example of the “Resident Survey” that can be found on START.

Go to <http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org>. Once residents identify programs that would be of interest to them, collect the responses and tally the results. Record the total number of residents who responded to the survey and the total number of marks for each survey item. Enter them into START to compare the priority of these programs.

The START tool will calculate the level of overall interest. This will allow you to gauge which programs will be the most popular.

Access START by visiting the Neighborhood Networks Web page and clicking on *Business Plan Resources* on the left-hand tool bar.

As a center planner, it is important to keep a few things in mind when planning a survey:

- ❑ **Conducting the survey:** Make sure that you know exactly the information you would like to obtain from the survey. It is recommended that residents be surveyed annually so it is important that the survey contain the best questions possible.
- ❑ **Preparing and scheduling residents for the survey:** Let residents know a survey will be conducted. Do not surprise them with it and make sure it is conducted when residents have time to participate. Holidays and school recess or vacations can be inconvenient times for residents to participate.
- ❑ **Maintaining confidentiality:** Many residents are wary of surveys. Unless it is absolutely necessary, do not ask for their name, apartment number, or other distinguishing characteristics.

- ❑ **Collecting and reviewing completed survey:** Do set deadlines. Ensure that residents return the survey to you in a timely fashion.
- ❑ **Determining the adequacy of the response rate:** Determine if enough residents completed the survey to provide an adequate picture of center operations. One way to entice residents to complete the survey is to offer an incentive. Some centers, such as the Villages of Marley Station Neighborhood Networks Center in Glen Burnie, Maryland, partnered with a local grocery store and gave residents \$5 gift certificates toward the purchase of groceries for completing the survey.

START is Not the End

START is a general business plan tool meant for all Neighborhood Networks centers, regardless of size or amount of activity. It may seem that it does not ask the appropriate questions or does not provide the answers that are most needed. That is why it is crucial to develop your own questions for your residents. Here are some questions that START does not cover that may be important for your center:

What times would you most likely use the center: mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekends? This question is vital for a center director. Some centers have to open early in the morning to accommodate residents who wish to use the computers before work or school. Other centers remain open late at night for residents returning from work. Some residents only have free time on the weekends. Determine which times are best for most residents and plan programming around them.

Do you learn better on your own or from another person? Some people excel in the classroom environment, some learn better at their own pace. Find out which is true for your residents and make programs available in both formats, if possible. Do you or your children have access to computers at work or school? For many residents, the computer at the Neighborhood Networks center is the only computer available to them. This information is vital because it can determine a resident's computer aptitude. It can help you decide whether a basic computer class is necessary.

Any question directed at residents with the intention of making the center more usable for them is never a bad question. Center planners do not have to be limited to the questions contained in START.

Other Data Collection Tools

Data Collection Tools

Listening Sessions

Public Forums

Some commonly used methods to collect information include:

- Small public forums to ask specific questions

Data Collection Tools

Listening Sessions

Public Forums

- Well-publicized, large gatherings to express views about community's development and future goals and ambitions

Data Collection Tools (continued)

**Needs
Assessment**

- A way to ask about most important collective needs

**Asset
Mapping**

Data Collection Tools (continued)

**Needs
Assessment**

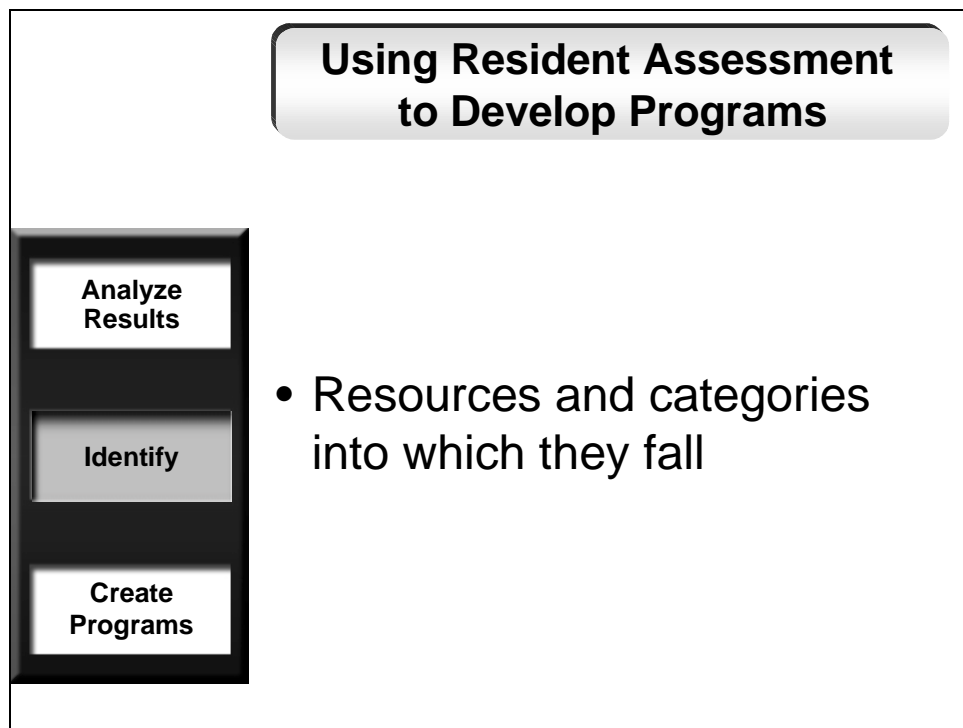
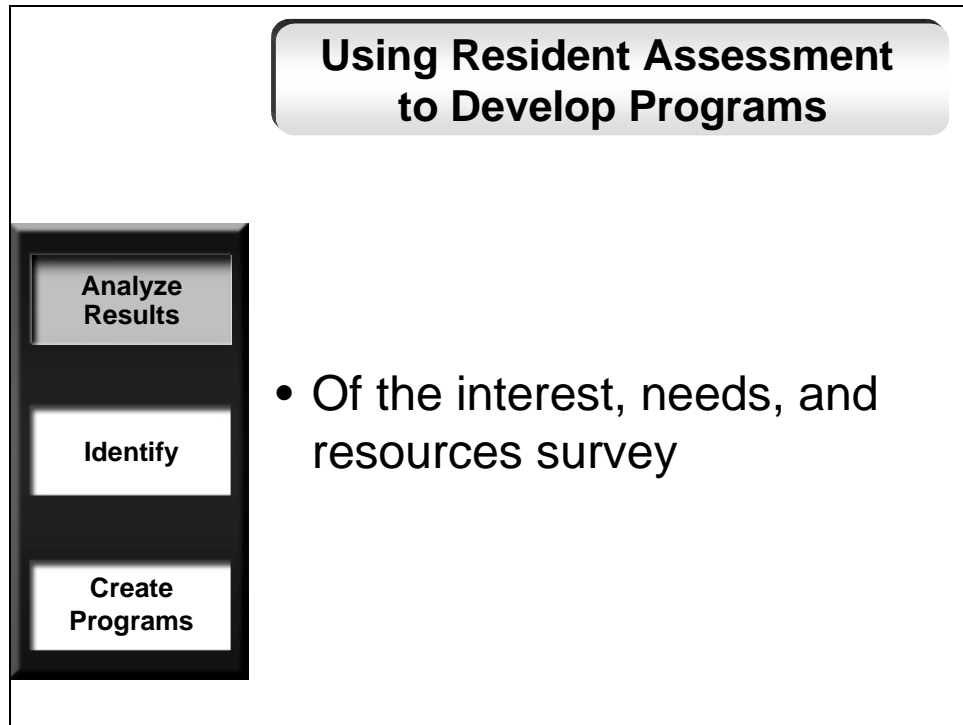
- Focuses on strengths of residents and communities
 - Diagram available resources, or assets, on a map
 - Show links between different categories of assets

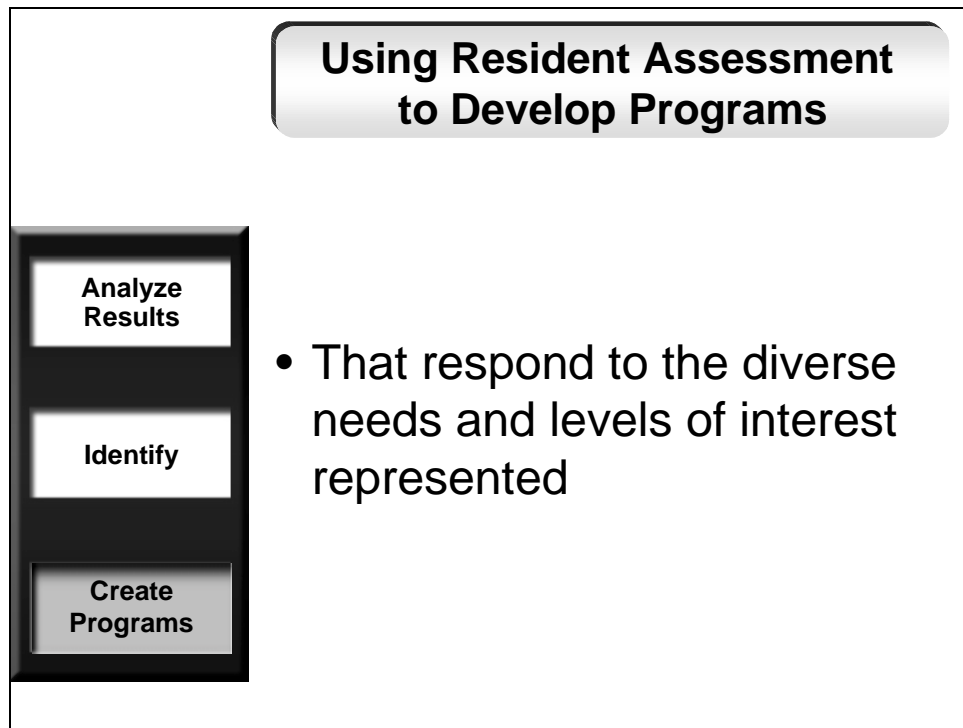
**Asset
Mapping**

In addition to administering formal surveys to gather information about residents, public meetings and forums can be held to provide opportunities for direct interaction with potential and current center participants. These can range from small “brainstorming” or feedback sessions to larger gatherings at community centers or other public venues. Consult the section on Public Speaking

to enhance your ability to communicate with residents, partners, and other stakeholders within your community about your center's programs.

Application of Data





Throughout this phase of gathering data about your center's residents, a picture should be emerging that will enable you to determine basic categories of needs and services they require and to identify resources in the community that can be used to address them. You can begin to work actively with residents to create programs such as English language instruction, job training, tutoring, computer software training, healthcare support and education, and other opportunities to increase the well-being and economic viability of your center and its residents. Residents can become more committed to the success of the center by helping to generate publicity and partnerships, and then by assuming paid or volunteer positions as instructors, coordinators, tutors, or other positions of responsibility.

Evaluation of Resident Participation and Satisfaction

In striving to create a center that is authentically and dynamically tapped into the collective aspirations of a community, evaluations are essential to clarify the reasons for a program's success or failure. The collection of this type of data can be made easier if the center's residents understand it as an opportunity to improve current programs and establish new ones. Most people will feel positively about the evaluation method if they know it will benefit them.

The following are examples of criteria that can be scored to provide a picture of the extent of interest, participation, and satisfaction among residents of your Neighborhood Network center.

1.	Some residents involved in center planning and providing feedback on center program needs and center operational needs.
2.	Active resident involvement in center planning, programs and operations; process and information gathering forms/tools to uncover resident program and center operational needs and resident satisfaction.
3.	Increasing resident satisfaction through center feedback forms; center process to actively manage alignment between center usage, programs, and resources.

4.	High resident/center user satisfaction as measured by customer feedback forms; high center utilization rates; residents volunteer in center for programs and center management.
5.	Broad, active resident involvement in volunteering, center management, programming, and operations; outreach and center programs for unserved or under-served resident populations.

Sustaining Your Center Through Resident Involvement

During the first year of your center's operation, your continuing focus should be on assuring its ongoing relevance and sustainability. Even the most popular programs may cease to generate attendance if they do not remain current with residents' skill levels and interests. The following tips are geared to keeping residents actively engaged in the process of securing your center's economic viability and of assuring its continued growth and attractiveness to residents and potential partners.

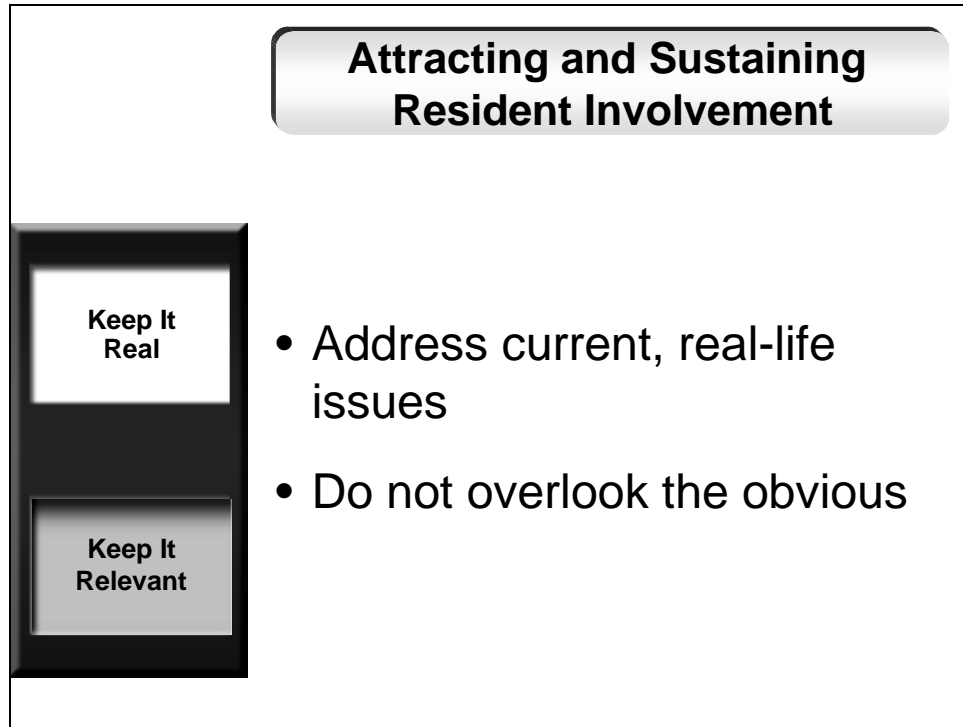
Attracting and Sustaining Resident Involvement

Keep It Real

Keep It Relevant

- Design programs that engage the whole person
- Design interaction that goes beyond providing a service

- ❑ **Keep it real**—Engage the whole person. Extend the center's impact beyond providing services to address current issues in the community. For example, Neighborhood Networks centers have become successful by developing programs with a technology focus. It is important to stress to your residents that while a center provides computers and technology training, another center goal is to develop a sense of community. Programs like childcare, healthcare awareness, drug- and alcohol-prevention programs, and family-based meetings all have a home within the center.



- ❑ **Keep it relevant**—In addition to the above, be sure to address current, real-life issues that are of immediate concern to your center's residents. Do not overlook community organizations that would be obvious stakeholders.

Keep It Dynamic

Attracting and Sustaining Resident Involvement (continued)

- Be willing to constantly redesign the center
- Hold regular feedback sessions
- Keep residents involved in every aspect of their NN center

- ❑ **Keep it dynamic**—Keep your center's objectives current by continually renewing and redesigning programs based on regular feedback sessions. Keep residents involved in every aspect of the center's operations.



Activity

Using the characteristics of a hypothetical Neighborhood Network center as a model, designate several participants in the group as planners and the rest as residents who will be using the center. Ask each to decide their age, race, educational level, and working status (full-time, part-time, unemployed, etc.) and a service that would be of value to them. Assign the planners the task of presenting a predetermined program or service to the residents, and ask the residents to respond according to their profile.



Online Resources

Beyond the Basics, Manual 2, Winter 2001

www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

This publication, *Sustaining a Neighborhood Networks Center After Start Up Success*, describes how a Neighborhood Networks center can form a strategic plan, run a sound business, and ensure the success of its program.

Neighborhood Networks Resource Guide—Second Edition, 1999

www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

This publication was developed by HUD to assist in the planning and development of Neighborhood Networks centers.

www.hudclips.org/sub_nonhud/cgi/pdf/14217.pdf

This rule enhances the rights of tenants in HUD insured and assisted housing to organize and participate in project operation and expands the assistance programs in which tenants have rights to organize. The rule also defines general characteristics of a legitimate tenant organization, such as regularity of meeting and democratic organization.

Chapter 4: Working With Residents

www.hudclips.org

Taken from the HUD Management Agent Handbook, this document provides guidance on working with residents.

http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1003.htm

This article provides information on the basic principles of developing a plan for identifying and assessing local needs and resources, conducting forums and listening sessions, analyzing community problems, and conducting interviews and surveys.



Presenter Biography

L. Nathaniel Rock, principal of Rock Consulting Group, has many years of experience as a public and community service administrator and previously served as project director of the Neighborhood Networks contract with Aspen Systems. Rock has many years of experience in community asset mapping, survey design, facilitating meetings, building productive public-private partnerships and convening community groups to develop a vision. As program manager with Aspen Systems for HUD's HOPE VI Program, he managed a team of technical assistance experts like himself who worked to help housing authority staff, residents, and community stakeholders frame community-building issues, develop strategies, and create sustainable community-building solutions. Rock enjoys working with community and business leaders, educators, elected officials, and other stakeholders to proactively address complex local issues. He has designed effective partnerships with community and business interests, government agencies, and foundations. Rock has special training in drug and alcohol prevention and curriculum development through Yale University, Drug and Alcohol Dependence Institute, and Vanderbilt University, Drug and Alcohol Relapse Prevention Training Series. Rock earned an M.Ed. in public and community service management from Cambridge College in Cambridge, Massachusetts and a B.A. in community service management from the University of Massachusetts at Boston, College of Public and Community Service.